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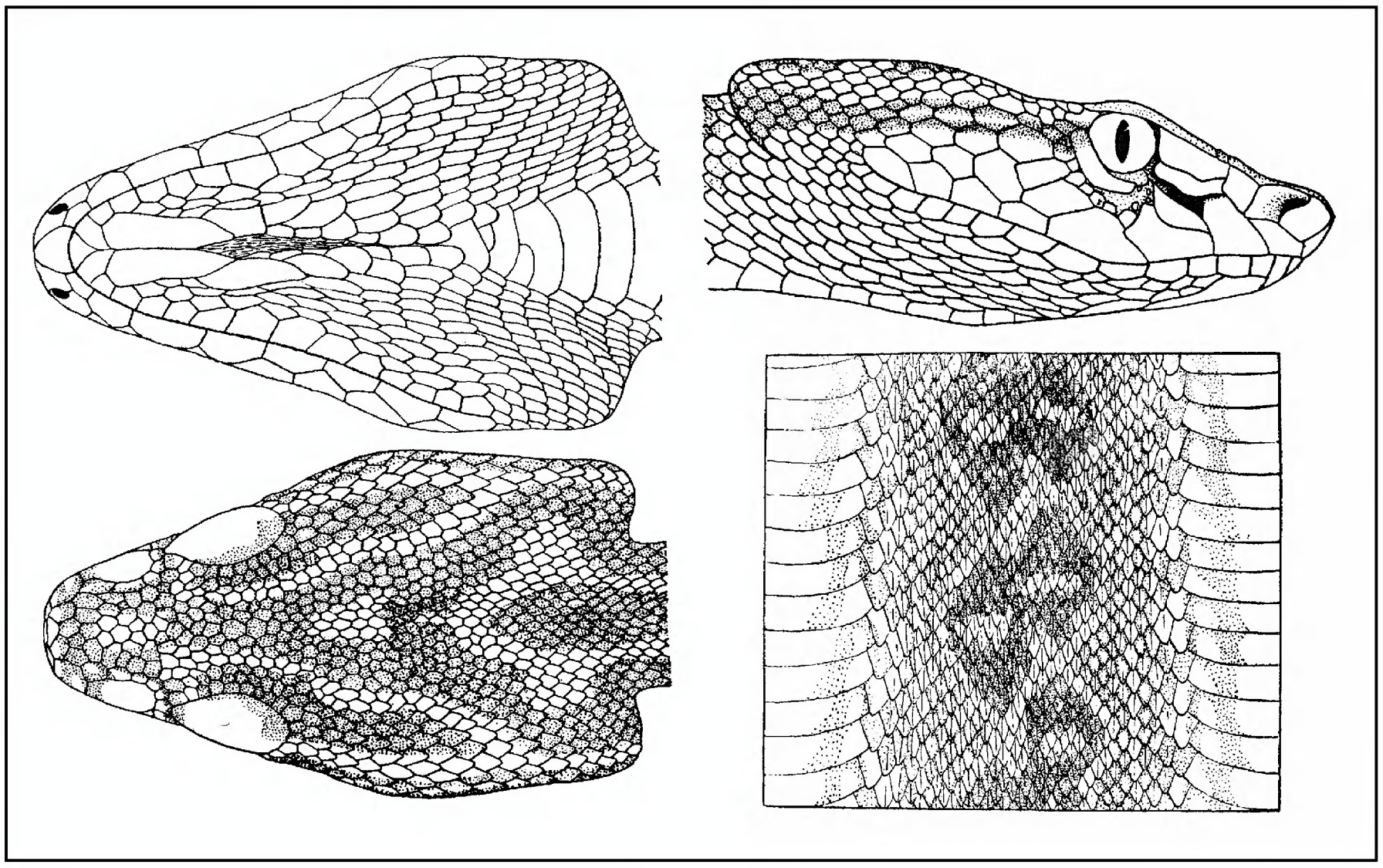

BULLETIN OF THE CHICAGO HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY
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Antique Herpetological Postcards

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Abstract

A collection of 113 antique herpetological postcards is described. In this context, "antique" refers to cards bought and sold by dealers. The minimum retail price was $1.00. Snakes, especially rattlesnakes, were the most common images on these cards, with alligators in second place. Eighty-eight percent of our cards fell into these two categories. The average price of the cards was $5.88, and the most expensive herpetological postcards we saw were priced at $25.00, although we were told that far more expensive ones exist but are exceedingly rare.

Herpetological collectibles include stamps, coins, paper money, buttons, jewelry, clothing and fine art, with a number of lesser known but no less interesting genres such as beer, wine and spirit containers, crockery, statuary, fetishes, and accent pieces. An overlooked field consists of postcards, and it is the purpose of this paper to describe a collection of 113 herpetological cards found at a recent "Postcard and Paper Odyssey" (aka, Denver Postcard Show, October 12–13, 2001). Table 1 presents retail values, where it can be seen that the range was from $1.00 (n=3) to $25.00 (n = 2). The mean retail value was $5.88 (SD = $4.24). Although some of the 30 national dealers at this show had individual postcards valued at well over $100, none of these contained herpetological subject matter. We were informed, however, that a few exceedingly rare herpetological items could command such prices, though none of these cards were available at this show. Readers should also bear in mind that postcards offered in this show were old and in fine to excellent condition. Many current postcards, particularly those featuring the ever popular dinosaurs, are available in stationary and specialty stores for less than $1 each. Therefore, a substantial collection of herpetological postcards can be assembled for a relatively modest outlay.

The present collection contained 74 unused cards and 39 used ones. The average values of the cards in these subgroups were $5.58 and $6.44, respectively, a difference that was not significant ($t = 1.02$; $df = 111$; $p > 70.05$). Some old cards had been sent through the mails, but because they remain in excellent condition and because they are rare, they manage to command high values. Indeed, the two most expensive cards we saw were in this category. (See Figures 1 and 2.) Accordingly, it should not be assumed that unused cards will automatically be more expensive than used ones. Consistent with this point was the fact that older used cards were more valuable than the newer ones. Thirty-three of our used cards had discernable postmarks, and we sorted these cards into the age categories shown in Table 2. The mean values of the age categories differed significantly, as verified by a one-way analysis of variance ($F=2.94$; $df = 8,24$; $p < 0.05$). Turkey's least significant range test revealed that the mean value of the cards postmarked 1900–1909 was significantly greater than the remaining means, which did not differ significantly among themselves.

Table 1. Distribution of retail values of 113 postcards.

Retail value ($)	Number of cards
1.00 – 1.99*	3
2.00 – 2.99	14
3.00 – 3.99	24
4.00 – 4.99	17
5.00 – 5.99	14
6.00 – 6.99	11
7.00 – 8.99	7
9.00 – 10.99	7
11.00 – 12.99	13
> 12.99	3

* No cards valued less than $1 were contained in this collection.

Table 2. Mean value of herpetological postcards in each of nine postmark-age categories.

Postmark-Age	Number of cards	Mean value ($)	SE
1900– 1909	3	15.67	4.70
1910– 1919	4	6.50	0.87
1920– 1929	4	5.88	2.89
1930– 1939	5	4.10	0.51
1940– 1949	4	4.50	0.87
1950– 1959	5	8.30	4.30
1960– 1969	4	2.63	0.38
1970– 1979	2	4.50	1.50
1980– 1989	2	3.00	1.00

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Figure 1. Triskeles or three legs joined at the hip and running, with medusa head (= gorgon's mask) superimposed over the hip. The triskeles is an ancient device, as is the head of medusa. Their joint appearance in a single image is uncommon, but this particular version is the emblem of Sicily. The card was mailed from Sicily to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1908.

Figure 2. The legend at the bottom of the card says: "Milking a rattler–Okefenokee Swamp Park–Waycross, Ga. This card was mailed from Waycross to Brilliant, Alabama, in 1952. Both this card and the one in Figure 1 had retail prices of $25, the highest values we saw for any herpetological postcards.

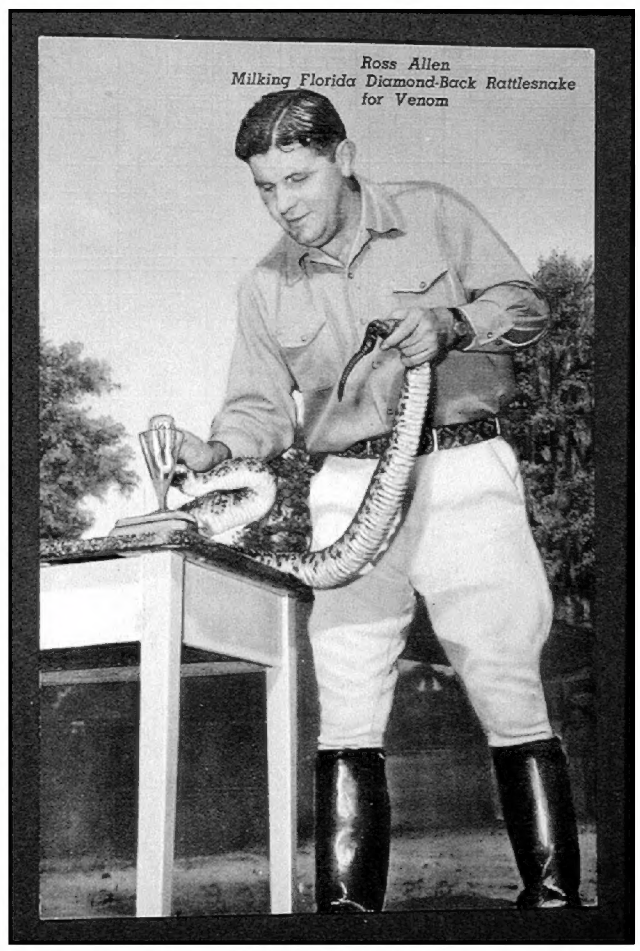

Figure 3. Vintage Ross Allen. This card was mailed from Merritt Island, Florida, to Pasadena, Maryland, in 1951.

Table 3. Themes exhibited in 113 herpetological postcards.

Subject	Number of cards
Frogs	5
Turtles	7
Gila monsters	2
Alligators	37
Rattlesnakes	32
Other venomous snakes	8
Nonvenomous snakes	19
Snake sculptures	3

Table 3 presents an overview of the thematic composition of the collection. Snakes dominated the imagery, and the vast majority of these 62 cards contained rattlesnakes ($\chi^2 = 32.05$; $df = 3$; $p < 0.05$). Nine of these featured Ross Allen in the process of extracting venom or mentioned his name and that of his establishment in Silver Springs, Florida. Two cards contained images of Instituto Butantan, Sã o Paulo, Brazil. Five cards illustrated snake charmers with one or more cobras. Our favorite in this subgroup was a card from Casablanca, Morocco, containing a "charmeur de serpents" engaging in an oral/lingual interaction with a puff adder while another is draped around his neck and a couple of cobras are coiled near his feet (Figure 4).

Two of the most interesting cards featured nonvenomous snakes. The first, from Trinidad postmarked 1909, contained a woman in a flowing white gown (that appeared to be a religious robe) handling two snakes, probably *Epicrates* sp. One wonders if the image alludes to Santeria or some such practice. The second card came from Instituto Butantan and shows a mussurana devouring a jararaca. Nine of the remaining nonvenomous images were of large constrictors, and the final ones contained kingsnakes (including a bicephalic specimen from San Diego Zoo), rat snakes, hognose snakes, and indigo snakes.

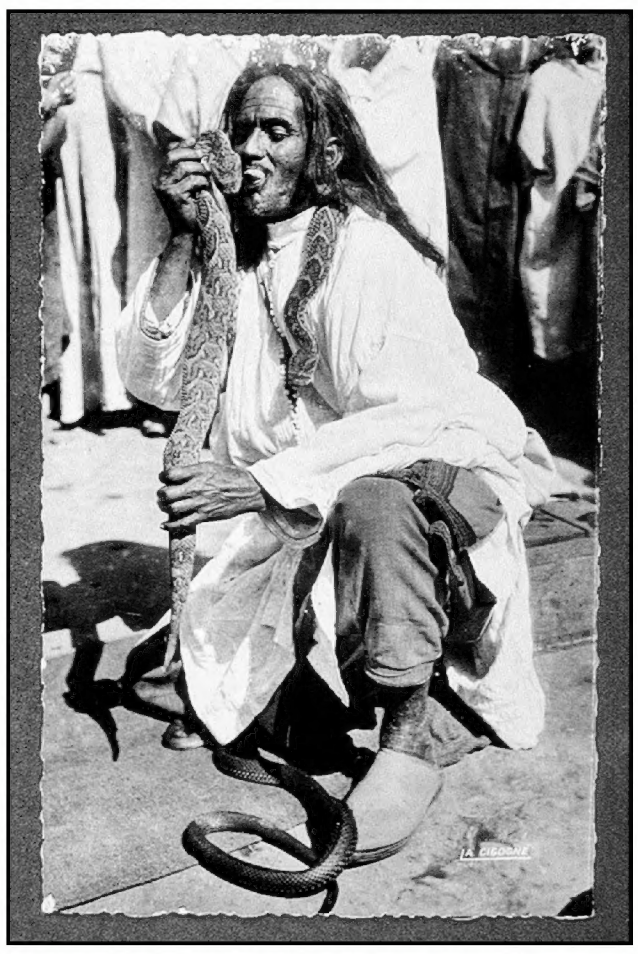

Figure 4. An unused card from Casablanca, Morocco, illustrating a professional herpetologist at work. Very close examination of this card with a loupe revealed what appears to be blood and suture material on the mouths of the puff adders.

Figure 5. Another unused card, this one illustrating a taxon unknown to us. Fortunately, the collection locality is given (Rice Lake, Wisconsin), and we wonder if the "Friendly Buckhorn" still exists.

One of the snake sculptures was shown in Figure 1, and we will not comment on it further except to say that the triskeles (without the superimposed gorgon's mask) was a common device on ancient Greek and Roman coinage (Jones, 1986), and it remains a common device on the Isle of Man. The other sculptures consisted of a giant python at Walt Disney World and a shovel-tailed snow snake (Figure 5).

Alligators were second to snakes in their frequency of occurrence on postcards in our collection, and the vast majority of the images were on cards that were souvenirs of Florida vacations. Twenty-seven of these cards were more-or-less generic in that no zoological or herpetological institution was mentioned, and the cards could have been purchased at any drug store or tourist stop. Not surprisingly, the artwork was of

Figure 6. This card was mailed from Key West, Florida, to Southampton, Pennsylvania, in 1961. Such scenes preceded the butchering of green sea turtles and the sale of their meat to the public as well as to local eateries. Although we saw no cards showing the actual dismemberment of turtles, we would not be shocked, albeit revolted, to learn of their existence.

variable quality on these cards. Four cards referred to the St. Augustine Alligator–Ostrich Farm, and a fifth advertised Tropical Hobbyland, Miami. The remaining five alligator cards came from states other than Florida: California Alligator Farm, Los Angeles (n = 3), Alligator Farm at Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas (n = 1), and alligators at New York Zoological Park (n = 1). Surely there are many additional alligator cards in current use, and interested collectors should have little difficulty in building a substantially larger collection than we have seen.

The turtle cards contained a Galapagos tortoise, a desert tortoise, an eastern box turtle, and several green sea turtles. Happily, at the present time we are unlikely to see images of the sort shown in Figure 6 from Key West, Florida: "These turtles are being taken from the Turtle Crawls and will soon be served as a delicacy in the form of green turtle steaks or green turtle soup at most of the Florida Key restaurants" (from the reverse side of the card).

Of the few remaining cards, the most interesting contained three lily pads, each with a frog, and the words "this is a 'wet town,'" presumably an allusion to the liquor laws of the town in Massachusetts where the card was obtained.

Although some of these old cards were of high artistic or photographic quality, most were not. Herpetological cards now in use are generally of better quality largely because of improvements in color photography and color printing. Additionally, many more taxa are illustrated on modern cards, frequently in natural habitats. These points will be documented in a subsequent article focused on herpetological postcards received (and saved) by Hobart M. Smith during the past fifty years, most dating from the past twenty years.

Herpetological postcard collecting has a bright future. This point might be underscored by the fact that only 21 institutions were mentioned or advertised in this antique collection. It seems probable that many more zoological institutions are today selling herpetological postcards, so that our institution list could easily be doubled or tripled. Of course, considerable time must pass before these modern items will enter the domain of antique postcards, but they will be herpetological treasures long before that. A literature is accumulating on the topic of antique postcards, and we can recommend Bowers and Martin (1980), Cox (1989) and Nicholson (1994).

Table 4. Alphabetical listing of zoological or herpetological institutions mentioned, advertised or illustrated on cards in our collection

Institution	Location
Alma's Snakes	Marathon, Florida
Brighton Museum	Kenya Colony, East Africa
California Alligator Farm	Los Angeles, California
Chicago Natural History Museum	Chicago, Illinois
Everglades Wonder Gardens	Bonita Springs
Hershey Park Zoo	Hershey, Pennsylvania
Hot Springs National Park (Alligator Farm)	Arkansas
Instituto Butantan	Sã o Paulo, Brazil
New York Serpentarium	North Hudson, New York
New York Zoological Society	New York, New York
North Carolina State Museum of Natural History	Raleigh, North Carolina
Okefenokee Swamp Park	Waycross, Georgia
Ross Allen's Reptile Institute	Silver Springs, Florida
San Antonio Zoo	San Antonio, Texas
San Diego Zoo	San Diego, California
St. Augustine Alligator–Ostrich Farm	St. Augustine, Florida
St. Louis Zoo	St. Louis, Missouri
Tropical Hobbyland	Miami, Florida
Turtle Crawls	Key West, Florida
Walt Disney World	Tampa, Florida
Woodland Altars Outdoor Education Center	Peebles, Ohio

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Bull. Chicago Herp. Soc. 37(5):85-86, 2002

"Hoop Snake" Found—Old Wive's Tale May Have Basis in Fact: Autophagous Behavior in a Southern Ring-necked Snake, *Diadophis punctatus punctatus*

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For many years, the story of the "hoop" snake was common in American folklore, particularly in the south. Various modifications of that story existed, but basically it consisted of a snake swallowing its own tail in an attempt to form a hoop, and then rolling downhill to escape predation. In some more colorful versions, the snake would use this technique to chase people, whereupon the unfortunate victim would be bitten or whipped. Professional herpetologists have denied this for years and relegated the story into the realm of fantasy or an "old wive's tale." On 20 July 2001, in Jacksonville, Florida, something happened which may give a little credence to the old story.

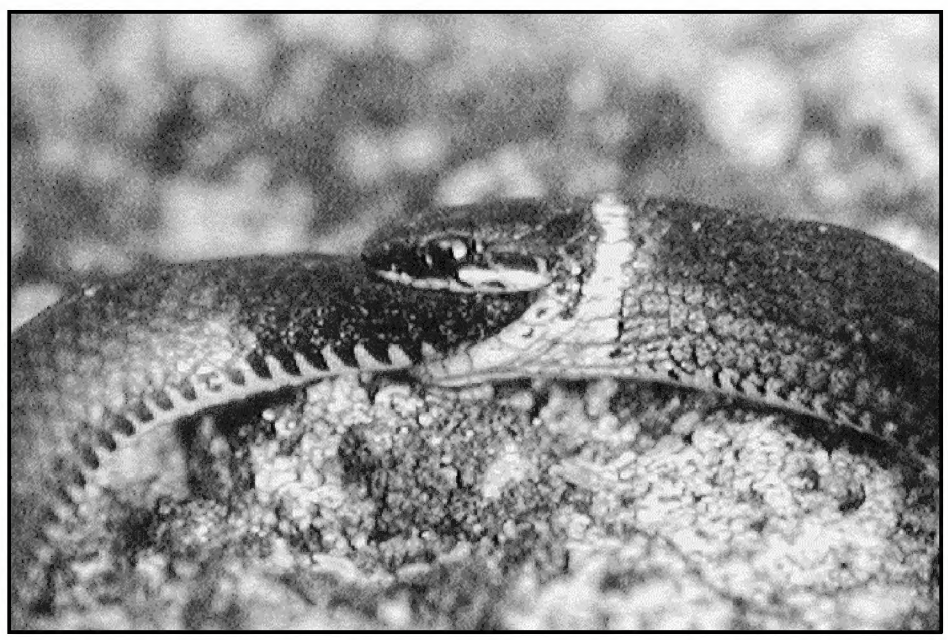
Dale Nixon, a Jacksonville resident, went outside briefly to get a breath of fresh air. Not planning on being outside for long, he didn't put on his shoes; instead choosing to go outside in his socked feet. As he was walking across his patio, he felt something small crunch under one of his feet. He had accidentally stepped on a snake. When he lifted his foot and looked down he saw a small dark-colored snake writhing on the ground. Not being to familiar with snakes, he carefully picked up the snake with a stick and placed it in a plastic container. Shortly afterwards, he noticed that the snake had grasped its own tail and begun swallowing. He then called us and we told him to rush the snake over for identification and possible treatment.

Upon arrival at the clinic, approximately 15 minutes later, we observed a juvenile southern ring-necked snake that had already swallowed about one-third of its total length (TL = 17 cm), and appeared to be dead. While rare, such autophagous behavior has been reported previously, in a rat snake that was warmed up very quickly after being very cold (Mitchell et al., 1982).

We photographed the snake and placed it in a quiet location, just in case it might choose to release its tail once the "danger had passed." However, it did indeed die in that position.

Why did the snake do this? Did it plan to "roll downhill" to get away? This is unlikely. Two hypotheses may be plausible. First, some salamanders and lizards are known to grasp their own tails when being attacked by certain predators, particularly snakes, which of course makes them difficult to swallow. Perhaps this little snake was confused, thinking it had been "grasped" by a predator, and acted instinctively. Indeed, this species is heavily preyed upon by other snakes, including racers and kingsnakes, and has an amazing repertoire of behavioral defenses. We once observed a southern ringneck being swallowed by a long-nosed snake remain motionless until its mouth was inside of the longnose's mouth, whereupon it bit the mouth of the longnose and hung on. Some 12 hours later, the longnose died and the ringneck crawled away! Certainly, many are aware of the bright yellow bellies and red tails of many of these snakes. Another anti-predatory behavior involves coiling the tail and holding it upside down to expose the bright red color. It is unknown how this behavior deters predators, but bright colors are often warning colors in nature, i.e., colors that warn predators that the animal carrying them are venomous, poisonous or distasteful. Biologists refer to this as aposematic coloration. And as a matter of fact, the little ringneck may indeed be venomous.

Another hypothesis relating to this particular snake may have been a serious injury to the spine. If the spine of the snake had been injured to the point where the snake was paralyzed and perhaps could not feel its own tail, it may have attempted to prey upon one of its preferred food items, snakes; in this case it may have started feeding upon its own tail! This hypothesis is more likely in this case because the snake had swallowed nearly one-third of its body length before it stopped; i.e., it is unlikely that an escape behavior involving a roll or



This southern ring-necked snake, *Diadophis punctatus punctatus*, swallowed its own tail.

When flipped over, one can see the characteristic markings of the southern ring-necked snake. It should be noted that the snake never assumed this position on its own.

anti-swallowing ploy would involve swallowing such a large portion of the body. The fact that the snake died shortly afterwards also supports this hypothesis, i.e., a behavioral anti-predatory behavior would probably not result in the death of the snake engaged in the behavior. A serious injury to the spine certainly might.

In either case, this observation is fascinating because it does demonstrate the existence of a behavior that has long been part of the fabled "hoop snake" lore. Whether or not a "roll" has occurred or could occur, or be an efficient means of escape is still questionable. At least the formation of a "hoop" has now been observed.

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Bull. Chicago Herp. Soc. 37(5):86-87, 2002

Book Review: *Problem Snake Management: The Habu and the Brown Treesnake* edited by Gordon H. Rodda, Yoshio Sawai, David Chiszar and Hiroshi Tanaka 1999. xix + 534 pp. Comstock Publishing Associates/Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY. $49.95.

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A voluminous and ever-increasing literature on introduced exotic or non-native wildlife ensures that research into the colonization ability of a myriad of species across taxonomic lines (invertebrates, fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals) and their subsequent adaptation to the presence of man will continue well into the future. In the case of amphibians and reptiles, entire monographs on selected introduced species and their impact on native fauna and man are recently available, i.e., *Bufo marinus* (Lever, 2001) and *Osteopilus septentrionalis* (Meshaka, 2001).

For less visible taxa such as snakes, typically difficult to study due to secretive habits or other factors, accumulation of data on the impact of aggressive colonizing species has been a slow process. Little consideration had been given to snakes as potential ecosystem destabilization factors prior to the colonization of Guam by the brown treesnake (*Boiga irregularis*). This has now changed with documentation of that species' devastating impact on Guam's native avifauna, as well as the human population and economy of the island.

On Okinawa and nearby islands, a native viperid, the habu (*Trimeresurus flavoviridis*) has proven extremely successful at adapting to the presence of man. High fecundity, a virulent venom, nocturnal habits and a diet of human-associated species (rats) have made this medically important snake the focus of multifaceted research, including its control, eradication and coexistence with man.

Now there exists a review chronicling the fascinating aspects of the natural history, biology, colonization ability and success, and the impact of these two divergent species on natural and human ecosystems. Here, following a forward by Harry W. Greene, the editors have compiled over a decade of research on these species into 7 sections, each with its own introduction and summary. Each section contains contributed papers encompassing general biology, venom and human health, behavioral and sensory biology, population biology, capture and detection, biological, ecological and chemical control, and conservation biology.

Within each aforementioned section, contributed papers address a wide range of topics, from general (biology, ecology, reproduction, life history), to more specific (ships and aircraft as dispersal agents for *Boiga irregularis*; use of power lines by snakes), and more amusing and somewhat eclectic papers on training and outfitting dogs to detect habu; and several short papers on chemical attractants and repellants, poisons, traps, fences and parasites such as *Entamoeba invadens* as potential control agents. Two papers deal indirectly with the negative impact and success of these snakes; i.e., methods to protect nests of the Mariana crow from brown treesnake predation, and a study on the diet of mongooses on Amami Oshima Island (which ruled out this animal as a control of habu populations). Each section introduction and contributed paper features its own literature citations. The epilogue summarizes the topics presented and outlines directions for future research.

Although their inclusion would have been nice, this book does not suffer from its lack of color photographs, considered by some publishers a "must have." All black-and-white photos are of good to excellent quality, and are complemented by equally informative illustrations. This is an excellent book and will provide a solid foundation into our understanding of the success of these species as colonizers, and our ability to coexist with and manage them. It further underscores the need for research into the impacts of introduced species everywhere, especially the potential or actual impacts of already introduced species in the U.S. and elsewhere, and caution when we attempt to alter or enhance ecosystems in the guise of "species recovery" or animal control programs.

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Bull. Chicago Herp. Soc. 37(5):87-90, 2002

HerPET-POURRI

by Ellin Beltz

The His-sss Italy Contest

"The hottest beauty parade in Italy this weekend won't feature long-legged Mediterranean beauties but more exotic creatures, with Grisu the green iguana high in the running. Three years old and half a meter of scaly skin, Grisu and his short, squat legs will face off against horny frogs and poisonous snakes in Italy's first reptilian beauty contest, part of a huge exhibit that began Friday. For three days, a Rome hotel will be overrun by lizards, snakes, giant turtles and tropical frogs as organizers put on Europe's biggest reptile show, not only to promote the quirky beasts, but to show off their beauty . . . [which] will be judged by a team of biologists and veterinarians.

. . . The exhibit, called 'Reptilia,' includes a trade and reptile exchange corner for some of the estimated one million reptile enthusiasts in Italy and a show of 40 dangerous snakes including green mambas, cobras and rattlesnakes." [*Reuters*, April 27, 2002, from Wes von Papineäu who writes that he's "Gone to buff his newt for the next show!"]

Tight squeeze

Workers from Carnegie Mellon University and the Pittsburgh Zoo and Aquarium have constructed a device they call the "constrict-o-meter" to measure the force of a snake's squeeze. The head of the mechanical engineering department at the former said, "Personally, what I learned was a lot more about snakes than I ever wanted to know. One is that, as opposed to the common belief that a boa constrictor squeezes its prey and crushes it . . . it really suffocates it." The constrictometer is a load sensor attached to a probe placed (here comes the hard part) between the snake and whatever it is squeezing. The sensor generates signals which are sent to a laptop computer. They found that an 18-foot-long snake applies about 12 pounds per square inch (psi) while a 5-footer generates about 6 psi. [Jefferson City, Missouri, *Post-Tribune*, March 6, 2002, from Vicky Elwood]

Not what the neighbors expected

Indiana police arrested two Granger residents and confiscated two venomous and two nonvenomous snakes as part of a drug raid that also netted 12 weapons, cocaine valued at about $50,000 and about $3,000 in cash. Neighbors were surprised but recalled hearing late night traffic around the home. Previously, the big excitement was an alligator turned in Mishawaka. [*South Bend Tribune*, April 2, 2002, from Garrett Kazmierski]

Train bites croc

The Sunday Times of Sydney, Australia, reports that a 3.4-meter-long adult male crocodile weighing around 200 kilos (2.24 pounds per kilo), was struck and killed by a Cairns-bound freight train as the croc lay on the railway tracks. A conservation officer retrieved the croc with a truck and hydraulic hoist and speculated the animal was moving from wetland to wetland across the tracks when it was struck. [April 28, 2002, from Wes von Papineäu]

Gator bites car

After a woman stopped to see what she had hit on a Florida road, she saw a long, greenish tail sticking out from under her car. She said, "The car started shaking and it was lifting the front end up. I just thought I was dead. I was screaming. I thought it was going to come up through the floor." People on the sidewalks were shouting and waving at her as the 7-foot-long gator rocked her 3,000-pound car. She managed to drive off it backwards and call police on her cell phone. The gator continued to snap at passing cars until it was caught and killed by a trapper. Workers at the auto repair said the alligator tore through the front bumper of her 2002 Mitsubishi Eclipse at a cost of about $1,000. [*Palm Beach Post*, April 6, 2002, from Alan Rigerman]

A dog-gone close one

A man who stopped to let his dogs take a dip in the pond at the entrance to an upscale Tampa mall ended up rescuing his dog from the jaws of an alligator. The man assumed the pond was safe and let his dogs romp in it until he heard yelping and saw one dog fighting for its life. State wildlife officials called in a trapper who removed the animal as a hazard. [South Florida *Sun-Sentinel*, March 31, 2002, from Alan Rigerman]

Some "Holy Week" events

• In Nicaragua, iguanas were being sold in the open markets for Holy Week dinner, even though the species is considered threatened and sale of the animal during the reproductive season is banned. [*Orlando Sentinel*, March 28, 2002, from Bill Burnett]

• If you know the "right people" you can still buy sea turtle meat in Mexico for Holy Week supper. It is believed that up to 35,000 sea turtles are poached every year along the Baja California coast and several thousand are caught deliberately for Catholics to eat during Lent when "meat" is prohibited.

Prices are anywhere from $10 to $20 per pound and some people believe turtle flesh is an aphrodisiac. Conservationists have asked the Pope to address the issue when he visits Mexico later this year. So far the Vatican has not responded to requests to declare turtle flesh "meat." [*Honolulu Advertiser*, March 30, 2002, from Ms. G. E. Chow; *Miami Herald*, March 31, 2002, from Alan Rigerman]

• Three turtles were speared and left wounded in their enclosures and two were stolen from Coral World in St. Croix (Virgin Islands). Sea turtles are a popular Lenten food item, and the turtles are totally protected by local laws. One of the turtles that was stolen, "Corky," an endangered hawksbill turtle was practically a mascot of the facility. The condition of the wounded turtles leads park authorities to believe the two stolen turtles were probably killed. One pointed out that if you were going to release a turtle, you wouldn't spear it first. Park personnel are evaluating security and said that cameras in the area of the turtle exhibit didn't pick up anything—probably because it was too dark to show up on video. [*St. Croix Avis*, March 27, 2002, from Ms. G. E. Chow; *Caymanian Compass*, March 28, 2002, from Larry Reed]

Forget turtle penis, try Viagra

Chinese traditional medicines for impotence and lack of male sexual performance may be on the decline now that Viagra and illegal copies of the drug are on the market everywhere in China. Male potency has long been a major issue in China and animals everywhere are slaughtered to feed the vast market for male potency enhancers in the world's most populous country. [*New York Times*, April 23, 2002, from Jim Stuart]

Decline evident to all

• Even though thousands of leatherback sea turtles nested on certain Pacific beaches two decades ago, only a few nests were laid last year. Researchers believe that fewer and fewer females remain to reproduce and suggest that commercial fishing as well as development along nesting beaches has contributed to the decline. [Reuters, April 23, 2002, from *GreenLines* #1613]

• Fewer olive ridley turtles arrived on the beaches of the state of Orissa in India this year. No large-scale nesting has occurred at all this year leading to speculation that the turtles have been killed by fishermen or scared off by human activities. [*Honolulu Advertiser*, April 14, 2002, from Ms. G. E. Chow; Tacoma, Washington *News-Tribune*, April 15, 2002, from Marty Marcus]

Are we reading the same story?

• Dozens of newspapers reported the story that atrazine, the top-selling weed killer in the U.S., disrupts frog sex organ development at concentrations 30 times lower than EPA limits. The work was done originally in the lab; researchers also report finding sexually deformed leopard frogs in atrazine-contaminated ponds in the Midwest. "The use of atrazine in the environment is basically an uncontrolled experiment—there seems to be no atrazine-free environment," the lead researcher said. "Because it is so widespread, aquatic environments are at risk." [Press release, University of California, April 16, 2002, from Allan Salzberg's *HerpDigest* April 21, 2002; journal article April 16 *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*; *New York Times*, April 17, 2002, from Ken Mierzwa]

• Then there was this piece from Fox News Network [April 19, 2002, from Wes von Papineäu]. To tell you the truth, I don't understand the author's perspective on the issue at all and so will quote directly from the story rather than misquote his position. Don't blame me, folks, check out the quotation marks. "Frog Study Leaps to Conclusions. This week's eco-horror claim is that the most commonly used herbicide in North America supposedly deforms the sex organs of frogs. . . . A University of California team led by Dr. Tyrone Hayes reported in the April 16 Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences that concentrations of the herbicide atrazine as small as 0.1 part per billion caused the deformed sex organs. But let's hold off on worrying about kissing a frog and getting a hermaphrodite instead of a prince, and focus for a minute on the scientific procedures and standards that determine whether research has led to valid scientific discovery or has simply produced more junk science. The hallmark of the time-honored scientific method is the independent replication of experimental results. Hayes' study is the first to report such findings and has yet to be replicated. Moreover, the write-up of his study is woefully inadequate in terms of providing useful information, such as statistical analysis and data. . . . As the researchers increased frog larvae's exposure to atrazine, supposedly up to 20 percent of the frogs had either multiple sex organs or had both male and female organs. The why-should-anyone-care component of this claim is that atrazine is often a detected contaminant in water supplies . . . supposedly reaching levels as high as 21 ppb in groundwater and 42 ppb in surface water . . . used in U.S. agricultural production for over 40 years. Annual use reaches 60 million pounds. Despite this substantial use, there has been no prior report of a corresponding increase in hermaphroditic frogs due to levels of atrazine typically found in the environment. And it's not like no one is looking for frog problems. Scattered reports of frog deformities—usually involving hind leg problems—have focused a great deal of attention on frogs since the mid-1990s. Further, in a 1998 study, University of Illinois researchers collected frogs from several different sites in Illinois to assess the effects of environmental contamination on the prevalence of frog hermaphroditism. Of 341 frogs collected in 1993, 1994 and 1995, 2.7 percent were hermaphroditic. But there was no statistically significant relationship between the chemical compounds detected—including atrazine—and frog hermaphroditism. So there's no strong basis for assuming that whatever happened in Hayes' laboratory is happening to any significant extent, if at all, in the real world. I have a feeling that the grim report is more akin to a Brothers Grimm fairy tale than science. In August 1997, the manufacturer of atrazine, Syngenta Crop Protection, convened a multi-disciplinary panel of scientists to study the potential effects of atrazine on fish, reptiles and amphibians. Hayes was asked to join the panel. Hayes contributed a laboratory study reporting a possible association between low levels of atrazine exposure and frog development problems. But the panel of scientists could not validate Hayes' data and recommended additional studies. Hayes subsequently

left the panel. A follow-up study could not replicate Hayes' results. At this point, we don't know whether Hayes' results can be replicated or not. Hayes claims to have conducted a sophisticated statistical analysis of his data, but neither his analysis nor his data are presented in his study. Certainly, his prior conduct casts suspicion over his claims. We are simply to take his word for it. No thanks. I'd rather kiss a frog. Steven Milloy"

Ewww, yuck!

• A graduate student at the University of South Florida in Tampa has created a flashy website where visitors can dissect a frog without killing a real animal. It's gross, so it should appeal to the average high school biology teacher. Log on and wield your own virtual scalpel at <http://www.froguts.com>.

• While we're grossing you out, a professor of aerodynamics at the University of Braunschweig, Germany, has found that amphibians can be killed by the rolling wave of high pressure which precedes the arrival of the actual automobile. He suggests this as the cause of dead amphibians found along roads with their internal guts blown out through their mouths but which were not struck by cars. Low-riders and other low sport cars are the worst offenders, their shock waves can cause an amphibian to burst. [*Science Magazine*, April 5, 2002]

• Continuing amphibian deformity studies published in the May *Ecological Monographs* report that the parasitic worm called *Ribeiroia ondatrae* is deforming 11 species of amphibians in the western U.S. Amphibians were sampled in California, Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Washington. Parasite samples were collected in natural waters and manmade features. Malformations were six times more common in parasite infested waters than clean water. Some places had 90 percent amphibian deformities. The affected animals include bullfrogs, Pacific treefrogs, Red-legged frogs and Cascades frogs. The parasite's life cycle comes from infected birds defecating parasites in pond water. The trematode then inhabits snails and finally moves over to amphibian larva where it causes deformities. It has been speculated that deforming the larvae provides more food for the birds which promotes the trematode's success and getting out of its natal pond. [*San Francisco Chronicle*, April 20, 2002, from Wes von Papineäu]

BYO what?

"Snake handlers may be wise to use a bit more caution when they perform their stunts at this weekend's annual Alamogordo Rattlesnake Roundup. The reason: The only hospital in town is out of antivenin, the only known antidote for snakebites. 'I don't know what they'll do if someone gets bit,' [the] roundup organizer . . . said. . . . Maybe one of the handlers will bring some with him.'" [*El Paso Times*, April 20, 2002, from Wes von Papineäu]

Just leave them alone

A 42-year-old man was bitten by a pygmy rattlesnake in Florida and was bitten a second time when he decided to catch the animal so that doctors could find out if it was venomous or not. He received eight vials of antivenin and is recuperating. It was the first dusky pygmy rattlesnake bite in Florida this year. Officials remind Floridians to always wear leather gloves while gardening or cleaning up debris and to call 911 rather than take fate into their own hands—so to speak. [*Miami Herald*, April 5, 2002, from Alan Rigerman]

One for the Hiss-tory Books

Officials at Dubai airport seized 118 snakes including five deadly cobras from other countries in the Gulf. This was the largest illegal consignment of snakes ever found in Dubai. The animals were turned over the Dubai Zoo until other arrangements can be made for them. [*Gulf News*, Dubai, April 18, 2002, from Wes von Papineäu]

Sorry St. Patrick

The snakes are a-slitherin' back to Ireland. A spokesman for the Dublin Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals said, "We're finding them in attics, in people's cupboards, under the sink in the bathroom. One family was watching TV when a snake crawled out from underneath. TVs are such warm places," but added that sometimes people's imaginations get the better of them and they've gone out for serpents which were really garden hoses. A snake breeder and seller in Dublin says that keeping snakes is growing in popularity because snakes are easy to care for and people are too busy for dogs. Many abandoned pets just die of the cold. [Leesburg, Florida *Daily Commercial*, March 17, 2002, from Bill Burnett]

Hawaiian Invaders

Several articles received from Ms. G. E. Chow reveal the ongoing struggle between Hawaiian wildlife authorities and those who have imported and are keeping non-native animals as pets on the island archipelago. *Honolulu Advertiser* [HA] reported on April 17 that the State Department of Agriculture took possession of the sixth green iguana on O'ahu in the past four months. Also an illegal knight anole was separately handed over to authorities. *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (April 17) reported that the iguana was spotted in a cage under a tree near a clinic. The fifth iguana was reported by HA on April 9 when residents reported "a large lizard" basking in a papaya tree. Number five was rather small, leading officials to speculate he may be part of a recently hatched clutch with up to 36 brothers and sisters scampering around somewhere. Fertilized eggs have been found in Waimanalo and a female iguana was caught which later produced fertilized eggs, so authorities consider there to be no doubt that iguanas have become established on the island. On April 2, HA reported that two adult veiled chameleons were turned in by a Makawao, Maui, resident and another resident turned in a poison dart frog. This is the first of the latter to be found on Maui; but they have been established on O'ahu since 1932 when they were released to control mosquitoes.

Gotcha!

After trying for more than a year, a wildlife trapper finally noosed an 18-foot Burmese python near a service plaza on the Florida turnpike. A grass mowing crew originally called in the snake last year, but it was gone when the trapper arrived. This happened four more times, but the last time he nabbed it.

The trapper said, "The girth is the size of a truck tire. If it isn't the largest snake ever caught in Florida, it's up there near the top." [*Orlando Sentinel*, April 20, 2002, from Alan Rigerman and Wes von Papineäu]

Sharp kids

"A big metropolitan-area DJ heard from a colleague that a snapping turtle had attacked a Canada goose at Dunderhook Park in Glen Rock. The DJ announced on air that he was going to go fishing for 'the monster' in order to protect other critters in the pond. Alert fourth-graders at the Willard School heard the scheme, and blew the whistle. Thus, when the DJ put his hook in the water on Tuesday, he received a summons for fishing without a license, and the turtle-loving grade-schoolers were heroes. [*Bergen Record* (Hackensack, New Jersey), April 19, 2002, from Wes von Papineäu]

Check your tanks today

A heat lamp placed too close to a lizard's tank burned up a whole garage and the room over the garage, causing damages of $60,000 in South Lake Tahoe, California. The fire spokesman said they get several cases a year where appliances were placed too close to combustibles. [*Tahoe Daily Tribune*, April 19, 2002, from Wes von Papineäu]

Tegu or not tegu, that is the question

"A metre-long carnivorous monitor lizard has escaped and is on the loose in Morecambe (UK). Experts have warned that the lizard could be aggressive and give small children a nasty bite. Posters have been displayed in a pub in Bare advising the public not to approach the lizard which escaped more than a week ago. As the weather begins to get warmer the lizard's chances of long-term survival in the outdoors are good. 'They can be aggressive . . . our advice to people is don't touch it," said a spokesman for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. [*Lancaster Guardian*, April 19, 2002, from Wes von Papineäu]

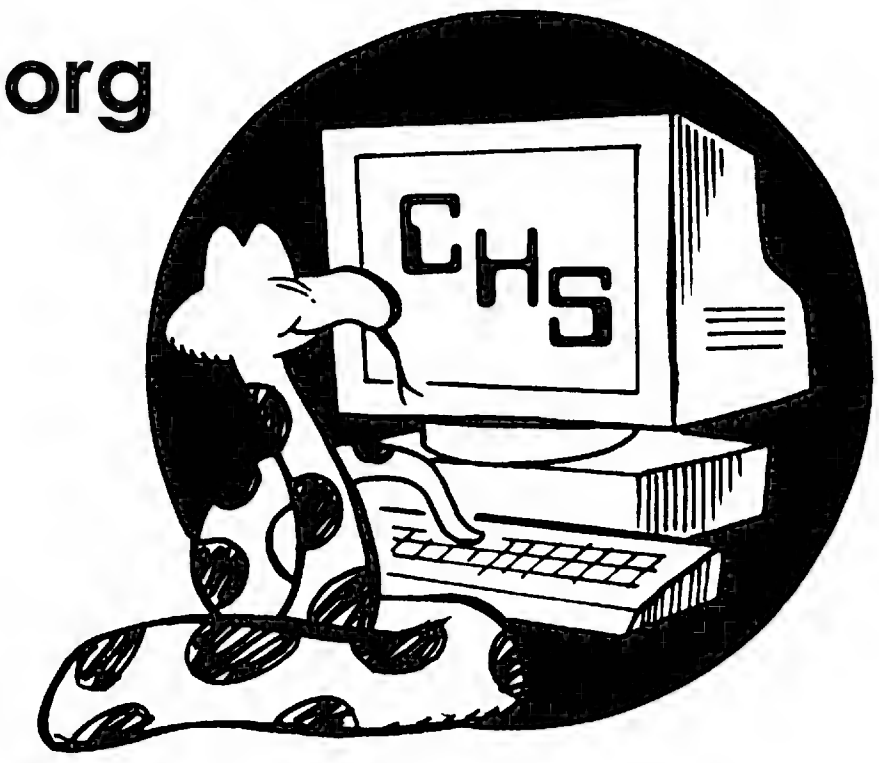
Just how many species are there?

A recent E-mail question arrived in my mailbox as to "exactly how many species of amphibians and reptiles there are in the U.S.?" I suppose they sent me the question because of my site on the names of the amphibians and reptiles of North America <http://ebeltz.net/herps/etyhome.html> but as I never counted the taxa and I don't maintain just the most recent list of genera and species I turned to Joe Collin's Center for North American Herpetology website for an answer. There are (drumroll, please) 1 amphisbaenian, 2 crocodilians, 56 turtles, 95 frogs, 107 lizards, 137 snakes and 176 salamander species, according to CNAH. After 16 years of columnating, I only have a quarter of an inch of salamander clippings, so their newsworthiness is in no way proportional to their dominance.

Thanks to everyone who contributed this month and to Ernie Liner, Dez Crawford, Marty Marcus, Alan Rigerman, Wes von Papineäu, Bill Burnett, Vicky Elwood and Ken Mierzwa for other articles, cartoons and postcards. You can contribute too, and I hope you do because it's a lot easier to write this column with material than without material. Send whole pages of newspaper or magazine with your name on each piece (those cute little address labels are wonderful for this) to: Ellin Beltz, P.O. Box 934, Ferndale, CA 95536. E-mail text only to <ebeltz@ebeltz.net>.

Next time you surf the WorldWide Web, crawl, run, slither, slide, jump, or hop over to the CHS web site!

www.chicagoherp.org



You'll find:

- **Announcements**
- **CHS animal adoption service**
- **CHS events calendar & information**
- **Herp news**
- **Herp links**
- **Meeting/guest speaker information**
- **Photos of Illinois amphibians & reptiles**
- **Much, much more!**

Chicagoherp.org is accepting applications for banner advertisements or links from herpetoculturists and manufacturers of herp-related products. Visit the site and contact the webmaster for details on how you can sponsor CHS!

Unofficial Minutes of the CHS Board Meeting, April 12, 2002

CHS Vice-president Lori King opened the meeting at 7:32 P.M. Board members Tom Anton, Greg Brim and Jack Schoenfelder were absent.

Officers' Reports

Recording Secretary: Emily Forcade distributed and read the minutes of the March 2002 board meeting. The minutes were accepted as read.

Treasurer: Greg Brim was absent. Mike Dloogatch distributed the treasurers' report. Greg had transferred $13,000 from the money market account to checking to cover ReptileFest expenses.

Membership Secretary: Mike Dloogatch said that ten new members signed up at ReptileFest, but he gave out many applications. Membership is still hovering around 800.

Vice-president: Lori King informed the board that the Utila Island project is creating an ecotrail to walk visitors through the site. At ReptileFest, there were many donations and some adoptions.

Corresponding Secretary: Steve Sullivan said that there were many calls about ReptileFest. One caller requested a Utila Island T-shirt. Lori said she would handle this. Several media people called our phone line and left messages but didn't get called back immediately. We need to do something to ensure that this doesn't happen again. Steve sent a thank-you letter to United Airlines for providing transport for the confiscated shipment of endangered Asian turtles. He also needs a letter confirming our insurance to forward to the people at North Park for our board meetings.

Standing Committees

ReptileFest: Darin Croft reported that ReptileFest had higher revenues this year than last, and will be producing a higher profit. (The final accounts are still pending.) Jim Hoffman distributed an analysis of attendance by category-associated revenue. The total attendance was 2,618. This was down by 300 from last year; but the total revenue was higher. There was greater revenue from vendors, but less from tattoos. The room cost was substantially less. Darin cited several things that had gone particularly well. The use of cash registers at the door made the entry line move more smoothly as well as providing us with better information about our intake. The hand stamp was helpful. Having the entrance and exit be the same made monitoring entry easier. The use of the concessions stand for exhibitors was more costly, but it was also more convenient. Dan Bavirsha and Jenny Vollman made the set-up on Friday go more smoothly and more quickly. The Herps of Illinois exhibit exceeded expectations. It drew much interest from the public with a large number of Illinois herps presented. The display allowed viewers to see them up close and personal. Linda Malawy, Claus Sutor, Ron Humbert and other CHS participants made a point of being available to the public to draw them into the exhibit and provide information. The St. Louis Herpetological Society loved the display and wants to put on a larger display next year. Rich Crowley took the lead in organizing the high quality exhibitor's packets. All in all it was a great show.

Regarding publicity, the consensus was that Radio Disney was not a productive source of advertising for us, given the cost. Many did not appreciate their presence on Saturday with the DJ and really loud music. Gary Fogel said that in the past small ads in the Reader hadn't been profitable. Steve Dale told Lori that most people who attend hear about it from several sources. Linda Malawy said we were learning much more about the free publicity that's available to us in publications. Claus Sutor was disappointed that Chicago Wilderness did not mention it in its newsletter, but only ran it on their website. There was no participation by Brookfield Zoo or the Shedd Aquarium. The old guard either view the 'Fest as a swap meet or want to discourage the keeping of reptiles in captivity. Mike Redmer said that since the DuPage County Forest Preserve District joined us, this suggests our image is improving. Perhaps the non-participation of a particular group or organization is an individual case. Lori King supported us being proactive with the media and with organizations, such as museums and zoos, that share at least part of our mission.

Grants: Mike Redmer said he received a thank-you letter from Chuck Knapp. He also received an E-mail grant proposal for next year. One of the recipients of a grant has requested a transfer of money to a different project. The grants committee will deal with this. During the 'Fest, $124 was collected in containers designated for grant donations. One exhibitor gave a small toy for any donation and this was quite successful.

Shows: Jenny Vollman is waiting to hear about Members Night at the Field Museum. It will probably be June 5– 7. Steve Sullivan received a request from a branch of the Chicago Public Library. They are looking for a speaker for June or July who can talk about how to take care of reptiles as pets. Ron Humbert said that the Plum Grove Nature Center wanted us to exhibit over April 19– 20. There are several other places that would like CHS participation on Earth Day (April 20). Ron Humbert will represent us at the Oak Forest Hospital Earth Day celebration on April 24 from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. and welcomed others to join him. The residents are mentally and physically handicapped people who are enormously grateful when we have presented at Oak Forest in the past. Lisa Yerian said that when people thank us for doing shows, we can ask them to publicize ReptileFest. Darin Croft said we could be listed with libraries as speakers. Lori King said that on April 21 at the Museum of Science and Industry we will be exhibiting at SuperCroc Family Night. The museum will be making a donation to the CHS Grants Program in return.

Raffle: Gary Kostka said he received six complimentary subscriptions from *Reptiles* magazine. If we can put together a two-paragraph statement, we can get more space promoting ReptileFest. Darin Croft offered to take care of this. Ron Humbert offered to run the raffle this month. Linda Malawy will sell tickets. We have received donations from Helix Camera and Burhops (gift certificates).

Library: Steve Sullivan is the new librarian. The library will be housed in his office but due to a lack of space for a cart, he will only have part of the library present at each general meeting. He will have a list of books, so if people want to request particular books for the next meeting he can bring them.

Adoptions: Ryerson Woods in Deerfield is looking for a small snapping turtle, painted turtles and a fox snake for a nature exhibit. Bob Bavirsha said he placed an iguana at ReptileFest to the man who was operating the vendor's booth for *Reptiles* magazine.

Ad Hoc Committees

Notebaert/CHS Exhibit: Ron Humbert said we expressed our concept, which was different than their idea. The committee will meet again with the Notebaert exhibit staff at 6:30 P.M., prior to the April general meeting.

Trips: The meeting at Carlyle Lake with representatives from the Illinois Natural History Survey will take place at 8:30 A.M. on April 19. They will provide information regarding the eastern massasauga rattlesnake in Illinois. The rest of the day will be spent in the field looking for specimens. Of the CHS board members invited, ten (and two family members) will attend. Several members of the press have also been invited. The next trip open to all CHS members will be to the Detroit Zoo. It will probably take place in September. Bob Herman will be in charge.

Animal of the Month: Ron Humbert questioned the success of the program. He viewed the turnout each month as low and that the same people participated each month. He thought the program should be ended. Once again, the view of the other board members was that they thought the members enjoyed it and even if the numbers of animals were small, the presence of live animals at each meeting was a real plus. Some suggestions were made that might increase participation. Perhaps broader categories of animals could be used each month. Instead of ribbons, we could award raffle tickets. Bob Cullnan suggested that the winner could be published in the *Bulletin*. Ron agreed to continue to be in charge and to try some of these modifications. The group agreed that for April, the animal could be any colubrid.

Old Business

The concept of a state reptile was discussed.

Due to the Christmas holiday, the December general meeting will be held on December 18, 2002

Jim Hoffman discussed our listserve. He would like to convert our E-mail list to Yahoo. This was acceptable to the group. Points of discussion included the ability to hide a person's E-mail address, open membership to anyone, and posting messages with moderator approval only.

Round Table

Gary Kostka said he thought this year's ReptileFest was the best ever. Steve Sullivan suggested that perhaps we could include a contest for good habitat enclosures. Darin suggested people think about their likes and dislikes to bring up at the post-Fest meeting. Lori King said that Jack Schoenfelder asked her to pass on his congratulations to everyone who participated to make this a very high quality event.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by Recording Secretary Emily Forcade

Answers to Herp-Acrostic #18

The quotation was taken from page 4 of *North American Box Turtles* by [C. Kenneth] Dodd:
"There is nothing mysterious about science; and although many professionals forget it, the scientific method begins with careful observation and curiosity, not dry hypotheses. Amateur naturalists have much to offer the scientific community in understanding the ways of box turtles."

A. Dog-toothed
B. Outcrossing
C. Dwarf
D. Dyestuff
E. Negev
F. Ounce
G. Rhynchocephalia
H. The Historie of Serpents
I. Harry W. Greene
J. Acidly
K. Mist net
L. Ettling
M. Rummy
N. Iaca
O. Clotho
P. Abacus
Q. Namib
R. Bushmaster
S. Outfit
T. Xanthic
U. The bends
V. Unify
W. Russian tortoise
X. Tethys
Y. Lace monitor
Z. Effusive
Z_1. Smithsonian Institution

Note: The editor greatly regrets the nasty error in the clue for Word C, which of course should have read *Pseudobranchus*, not *Pseudotriton*.

Herpetology 2002

In this column the editorial staff presents short abstracts of herpetological articles we have found of interest. This is not an attempt to summarize all of the research papers being published; it is an attempt to increase the reader's awareness of what herpetologists have been doing and publishing. The editor assumes full responsibility for any errors or misleading statements.

ECOLOGY OF AFRICAN BLINDSNAKES

J. K. Webb et al. [2001, J. Herpetology 35(4):558-567] studied diets, sexual dimorphism, and reproductive biology of six taxa of poorly known African blindsnakes (*Rhinotyphlops lalandei*, *R. mucruso*, *R. schlegelii petersii*, *R. schlegelii schlegelii*, *Typhlops bibronii*, and *T. fornasinii*) by dissection of 649 preserved museum specimens. Females matured at larger sizes than conspecific males, and the degree of sexual size dimorphism was most extreme in the large, heavy-bodied *R. s. schlegelii*. Reproduction was highly seasonal in temperate-zone *T. bibronii* and *R. lalandei*, with vitellogenesis in spring, oviposition in late summer, and hatching in autumn. All species were oviparous, with mean clutch sizes of four to 25 eggs. Clutch sizes were strongly correlated with maternal body size in *T. bibronii* and *R. lalandei*. African *Rhinotyphlops* and *Typhlops* fed mainly on larvae and pupae of ants (88– 97% of prey items for five of the six species), but adult termites were also eaten. Only *R. mucruso* fed on termites to a significant degree (38% of prey items). All species fed infrequently on large numbers of small prey (mean number of prey per stomach = 80.4, range 1– 927 items). Remarkably, although they attain almost 1 m in length, the world's largest blindsnakes, *R. schlegelii* and *R. mucruso*, fed on relatively small termites and ant brood. Collectively, the authors' data show that typhlopid snakes have remarkably conservative diets, supporting the idea that the peculiar skull morphology of the Typhlopidae is an adaptation to feeding on small, clumped, immobile prey. These findings support the hypothesis that the binge-feeding strategy of typhlopid snakes (rapid ingestion of prey, low feeding frequency, and large meal size) evolved to minimize the time spent inside ant nests and, thus, to reduce the risk of prey-inflicted injuries.

GENETIC VARIABILITY OF TWO TURTLE SPECIES

B. C. Bock et al. [2001, Chelonian Conservation and Biology 4(1):47-52] report that electrophoretic analysis of *Podocnemis expansa* from Peru and Brazil revealed significant allele frequency differences among populations at four of five polymorphic loci. One locus also demonstrated significant allele frequency differences among individuals between Brazilian nesting beaches separated by only 80 km. Electrophoretic analysis of *P. unifilis* from Peru and Brazil, as well as from three nesting sites along the Caquetá River in Colombia exhibited higher levels of genetic variability than *P. expansa*, differing significantly in allele frequencies at eight of nine polymorphic loci. The three Colombian sub-populations differed as much genetically from each other as they did from Peruvian and Brazilian populations. The results argue that current conservation management practices, such as protecting only a small number of nesting beaches within a reserve, may be inadequate, and that transplanting juveniles from their natal beaches may be inappropriate.

PREDATION EFFECTS ON TADPOLES

S. C. Walls et al. [2002, Herpetologica 58(1):104-118] note that fundamental issues in the study of predator– prey interactions include addressing how prey coexist with their predators and, moreover, whether predators promote coexistence among competing prey. The authors conducted a series of laboratory experiments with a freshwater assemblage consisting of two predators that differed in their foraging modes (a crayfish, *Procambarus* sp., and the western mosquitofish, *Gambusia affinis*) and their prospective anuran prey (tadpoles of the narrow-mouthed toad, *Gastrophryne carolinensis*, and the squirrel treefrog, *Hyla squirella*). They examined whether competition occurs within and between these two prey species and, if so, whether the nonlethal presence of predators alters the outcome of competitive interactions. They also asked whether the two species of prey differ in their susceptibility to the two types of predators and whether interspecific differences in predator avoidance behavior might account for this variation. Results indicated that *Gastrophryne* was a stronger competitor than *Hyla*; at high densities, *Gastrophryne* reduced the body size of both congeners and conspecifics, as well as the proportion of surviving conspecifics that metamorphosed. However, the presence of mosquitofish did not alter the outcome of this competition, nor did either type of predator affect the density-dependent responses of *Gastrophryne*. In laboratory foraging trials, the number of tadpoles of each prey species that was killed, but not completely consumed by mosquitofish, was similar for *Gastrophryne* and *Hyla*. Yet, significantly more individuals of *Gastrophryne* than of *Hyla* were the first prey eaten by mosquitofish; there was no difference in the number of individuals of each species eaten by crayfish. Overall, more individuals of *Gastrophryne* than of *Hyla* were killed and completely eaten by mosquitofish at the end of the experiment. The two species of prey did not differ in their spatial avoidance of either type of predator, suggesting that this behavior did not play a significant role in the differential vulnerability of the prey to predation. By reducing the abundance of *G. carolinensis*, the potential exists for predators, such as mosquitofish, to ameliorate this species' competitive impact on other species. In this way, predators may promote coexistence of species within some assemblages of amphibians.

ENGLISH NAME FOR *PSEUDOHAJE GOLDII*

D. G. Broadley [2002, African Herp News 34:2-3] has noticed that many authors continue to refer to *Pseudohaje goldii* as "Gold's cobra" or "Gold's tree cobra." This is incorrect, as Boulenger named the species after Sir George Taubman Goldie, Governor of the Royal Niger Company. Furthermore, there is some doubt as to the extent to which snakes of the genus *Pseudohaje* are arboreal. Therefore, Broadley recommends that *Pseudohaje goldii* should be known as "Goldie's false cobra."

BLANDING'S TURTLES IN THE SUBURBS

C. S. Rubin et al. [2001, Chelonian Conservation and Biology 4(1):136-141] feel that the greater Chicago metropolitan area may represent the best chance for the survival of Blanding's turtles (*Emydoidea blandingii*) in Illinois, where the species is listed as threatened. However, decades of urban and suburban development have resulted in habitats that are small and isolated such that they may not be adequate for the year-round needs of Blanding's turtles. With the development of management recommendations in mind, the authors conducted a radiotelemetry study from 1996 to 1998 in two local forest preserves in suburban Chicago to provide information on habitat use and movements of Blanding's turtles. Radiotelemetry observations for 24 individuals (14 males and 10 females) showed that during late summer when natural wetlands were rapidly drying Blanding's turtles were often found on dry land or migrating to bordering residential ponds. However, no evidence was found of extensive movements beyond the periphery of the preserves or into other nearby natural areas. No mortality as a result of vehicular traffic was observed throughout the study. The findings indicated that Blanding's turtles in suburban Chicago are isolated and may be subject to inbreeding and hazardous environmental conditions, such as droughts. The persistence of Blanding's turtles in suburban Chicago may depend on management interventions that make permanent water available year-round.

VARIATION IN AGE AND SIZE AT MATURITY

E. Wapstra et al. [2001, Copeia (3):646-655] note that age and size at maturity are pivotal life-history traits through their effects on other key traits, such as annual and lifetime fecundity. They used skeletochronology to investigate the relationships among size (snout– vent length), age, and maturity in two populations of a small viviparous skink, *Niveoscincus ocellatus*, from Tasmania, Australia. The species occupies a wide geographic and climatic range within the temperate zone, and populations were chosen from the climatic extremes of this range. Growth in *N. ocellatus* is rapid early in life but slows considerably after maturity in both sexes. Within sites, the authors found no difference in growth patterns or length at maturity between the sexes. However, there were large differences between sites. At the "warm" site, lizards were mature at three years of age at a relatively small size. Lizards from the "cold" site typically delayed maturity until their fourth year (although some males were mature at the end of their third year); as a result, they were significantly larger at maturity and thereafter remained larger for any age than did warm-site lizards. These patterns are consistent with predictions from models of the proximate influence of the thermal environment on growth and maturity patterns in squamate reptiles. Lizards from the cold site are born later in the season and have a shorter activity season prior to obligatory winter hibernation, and conditions for growth are less favorable in any particular month than at the warm site. Because delaying maturity is costly to current fecundity, the authors suggest that in *N. ocellatus* lifetime fecundity is enhanced at the cold site by additional growth and gains in future fecundity through the relationship between body length and reproductive output.

THREATS TO URBAN LIZARDS

J. Koenig et al. [2002, J. Herpetology 36(1):62-68] note that human activities affect animal populations whenever animals and humans live in close proximity, but patterns of mortality in urban wildlife remain poorly known. They analyzed rates of injury and mortality of bluetongue lizards (*Tiliqua scincoides*) in Sydney, Australia, using a Wildlife Information and Rescue Service database that contained more than 2000 reported "rescues" of this species over a three-year period. Motor vehicles and dogs killed many adult lizards in springtime (the mating season) when adult males move about more frequently. Domestic cats killed mainly juvenile lizards, especially just after parturition in midsummer. Weather conditions affected rescue rates, presumably because lizards were more active on hot dry days. Habitat loss was the most important cause for lizard rescue in highly urbanized areas, whereas domestic pets were a major threat in outlying suburbs. Such datasets are subject to many biases but allow meaningful comparisons at some levels of analysis. The large datasets of wildlife rescue groups have considerable potential to illuminate the nature and frequency of interactions between humans and wildlife.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIGH-SPURS

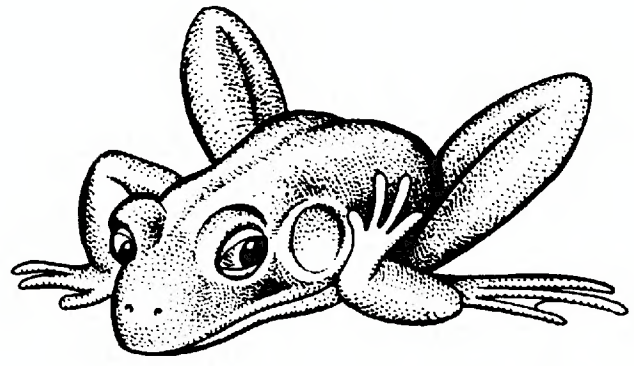
J. Perälä [2002, Herpetozoa 14(3/4):123-126] investigated 71 specimens of *Testudo marginata* and *T. weissingeri* to clarify the taxonomic significance of the presence or absence of spurs on the upper thigh region in both species. The results suggest that thigh-spurs, which are generally supposed to be absent or relatively infrequent in both taxa, are actually very common in both examined species. Males and females do not differ significantly in thigh-spur frequencies within or between the investigated taxa. Thus the presence or absence of thigh-spurs cannot be used reliably to taxonomically characterize *T. marginata* or *T. weissingeri*.

HABITAT PARTITIONING ON MISSOURI GLADES

A. L. Angert et al. [2002, J. Herpetology 36(1):23-29] report that collared lizards, *Crotaphytus collaris*, live in isolated populations on Missouri glades. Anecdotal observations suggest that another lizard species, *Sceloporus undulatus*, is rare on glades where *C. collaris* is present. Possible causes of scarcity of *S. undulatus* in the presence of *C. collaris* include competition, predation, and unsuitable thermal conditions. The authors characterized thermal biology and habitat partitioning in these two species by measuring body and air temperatures, and microhabitat use, at three glades. *Sceloporus undulatus* maintains lower body temperatures than *C. collaris* and shifts from open rock perches to shady tree perches during the middle of its activity season. *Crotaphytus collaris* microhabitats are rockier and more open than those of *S. undulatus*, which tend to have more branches, leaves and trees nearby. These data indicate that areas of glades hot enough for use by *C. collaris* are too hot for *S. undulatus*. Although competition or predation cannot be ruled out, constraints of the thermal environment may be an important factor in the apparent scarcity of *S. undulatus* on glades.

The Tympanum

Ditmars Remembered



Raymond L. Ditmars, the best-known herpetologist of the first part of the 20th century, passed away 60 years ago this May 12. Although he departed without leaving a full autobiography, during the 1930s, after becoming what today would be termed a senior citizen, this prolific author wrote much about his life and adventures in: *Strange Wild Animals I Have Known* (1931), *Thrills of a Naturalist's Quest* (1932), *Confessions of a Scientist* (1934), *Snake Hunter's Holiday* (1935), and *Making of a Scientist* (1937). Although not completely accurate, Laura N. Wood's *Raymond L. Ditmars: His Exciting Career with Reptiles, Animals and Insects* (1944) is the only biography available.

Ditmars devoted many pages about his efforts to capture, display, and successfully care for the elusive bushmaster (*Lachesis muta*). There's rumor of a new *National Geographic* video about these enigmatic serpents which would also feature the influences of Ditmars. I hope this project gets completed, for I'd love to see him brought into the 21st century. No disrespect intended, but I think that today's audience needs to know that everything didn't begin with Steve Irwin.

The "cartoon" is from *Popular Science Monthly*, July 1940, pp. 76-77. **Raymond Novotny, Ford Nature Center – Mill Creek MetroParks, 840 Old Furnace Road, Youngstown, OH 44511.**

Here's My Story
AT FIFTEEN I WAS A STUDENT AT BARNARD SCHOOL IN NEW YORK CITY AND A MEMBER OF THE CADET CORPS. MY FATHER WANTED ME TO STUDY FOR WEST POINT..
BUT I PREFERRED SNAKES TO THE ARMY. SATURDAYS AND HOLIDAYS I SPENT HUNTING GARTER SNAKES IN THE PARK...
I KEPT THEM IN MY ROOM ALONG WITH A BIG FOUR-FOOT WATER SNAKE. WHEN MY FATHER DISCOVERED MY COLLECTION HE TOLD ME I'D HAVE TO GET RID OF IT....
SO I EXCHANGED THE WATER SNAKE FOR A COLLECTION OF FROGS--I FED THEM WITH FLIES TRAPPED IN A STABLE AND KEPT THEM IN MY ROOM. ONE DAY THE FLIES ESCAPED AND SWARMED BY THOUSANDS THROUGH THE HOUSE. THE FROGS HAD TO GO TOO...
INSECTS WERE MY NEXT INTEREST.... ONE DAY I TOOK MY COLLECTION TO THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY TO CHECK THE NAME OF A MOTH...THE CURATOR OFFERED ME A JOB MOUNTING SPECIMENS
A FEW YEARS LATER I MADE MY FIRST EXPEDITION--AN INSECT-HUNTING TRIP TO FLORIDA..
THE ADVENTURE WAS LIKE ENTERING A NEW WORLD..

The ADVENTURES of a SNAKE HUNTER by Raymond L Ditmars
DO NOT FEED
FROM ENTOMOLOGY I TURNED TO REPORTING FOR A NEW YORK PAPER... WHILE COVERING AN ASSIGNMENT AT THE BRONX ZOO, I MET DR. WILLIAM T. HORNADAY
DR. HORNADAY TOOK AN INTEREST IN ME AND ASKED ME IF I'D LIKE TO RUN THE ZOO'S REPTILE HOUSE. I JUMPED AT THE OPPORTUNITY.
THE POSITION WAS SPICED WITH ADVENTURES-- ONCE A BEAR BROKE LOOSE AND I HELPED RECAPTURE IT... AN ADVENTURE OF THE FIRST ORDER.
ON ONE OF MY MANY EXPEDITIONS, I CAPTURED AND BROUGHT FROM TRINIDAD A PAIR OF GIANT BATS ... THE FIRST EVER TO LEAVE THEIR NATURAL HABITAT FOR EXHIBITION IN A ZOO....
Today- DR. DITMARS IS CURATOR OF MAMMALS AND REPTILES AT THE NEW YORK ZOOLOGICAL PARK... AND ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST NOTED AUTHORITIES ON SNAKES.

Advertisements

For sale: rats and mice—pinkies, fuzzies and adults. Quantity discounts. Please send a SASE for pricelist or call Bill Brant, *THE GOURMET RODENT*, 6115 SW 137th Avenue, Archer FL 32618, (352) 495-9024, E-mail: GrmtRodent@aol.com.

For sale: murine-pathogen-free rats and mice available in all sizes, live or frozen: pinkies, fuzzies, crawlers, small, medium and large. Frozen crawler mice in lots of 2000, $.17 each. Also available, full grown hairless mice. FOB shipping point. Master Card accepted. Call (518) 537-2000 between 8:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. or write SAS Corporation, 273 Hover Avenue, Germantown NY 12526 for prices and additional information.

For sale: from **The Mouse Factory**, producing superior quality, frozen feeder mice and rats. We feed our colony a nutrtionally balanced diet of rodent chow, formulated especially for us, and four types of natural whole grains and seeds. Mice starting from: pinks, $.17 each; fuzzies, $.24 each; hoppers, $.30 each; weanling, $.42; adult, $.48. Rats: starting with pinks at $.45 each, to XL at $1.80 each. Discount prices available. We accept Visa, MC, Discover or money orders. P.O. Box 85, Alpine TX 79831. Call us **toll-free** at (800) 720-0076 or visit our website: http://www.themousefactory.com.

For sale: from Bayou Rodents, excellent quality feeder mice and rats. Every size available. Pinks starting at $20/100. Orders are shipped by overnight service Monday thru Thursday. We accept Visa, MasterCard and Discover. For more info, contact Rhonda or Peggy, (800) 722-6102.

For sale: **high quality frozen feeders**. Over a decade of production and supply. Seven sizes of mice availabe: small newborn pinks up to jumbo adults. Prices start at $25 per 100. Feeders are separate in the resealable bag, not frozen together. Low shipping rates. Free price list. Kelly Haller, 4236 SE 25th Street, Topeka KS 66605, (913) 234-3358 evenings and weekends.

For sale: herp books. *Amphibians and Reptiles of Indiana*, 1972, 346 pp., 65 b&w photos, softbound, $22; *The Reptiles of Maryland and the District of Columbia* by Robert H. McCauley, Jr., 1945, 194 pp., 48 b&w photos, 46 range maps, softbound, $35; *The Reptiles & Amphibians of Alabama* by Robert Mount, 1975, 345 pp., 350 figs. (b&w photos, range maps), softbound, $22; *Turtles of the United States & Canada* by Clifford Pope, 1961 (1939), 337 pp., 98 b&w photos, DJ, hardbound, $35; *Amphibians and Reptiles of the Carolinas and Virginia* by Martof, Palmer, Bailey, and Harrison, 1980, 264 pp., 196 color photos, hardbound, $35; *Encyclopedia of Australian Animals—Reptiles* by Harald Ehmann, 1992, 495 pp., color photos of most species, small tear in DJ and DJ slightly worn, comprehensive reference, DJ. hardbound, $120. All books in excellent condition except as noted. $2.50 postage and handling for orders under $25, free for orders $25 or more. William R. Turner, 6838 S. Ivy Street, Apt. 302, Englewood, CO 80112, (720) 493-9378, E-mail: turnerbmrk@prodigy.net.

For sale: **Now accepting reservations for 2002 rare/unusual garters**: We expect offspring to be available in June or July. **Easterns**: Blais flames, $50–125 each; Blais speckled flames, $125 each; Blais peach flames, $50 each; erythristic easterns (high red) $50–100 each; double het (erythristic × melanistic eastern), $175/pair; double het (erythristic × Blais flame), $175/pair; melanistic eastern, $35 each; Florida Blue, $10–50. **Plains**: Snow plains (2 strains), $300 each, hets, $150 each; Albino plains (2 strains), $125 each, hets, $50; anerythristic plains (2 strains), $75 each, hets, $40 each, possible het plains (66%), $35 each; normal plains, $25 each / 2 for $40. **Red-sideds**: Albino red-sideds (very limited numbers), $350 each, 66% possible het, $100 each, 50% possible het, $75 each; anerythristic red-sided, $100 each, hets, $50, possible hets, $35 each; normal red-sideds $25 each / 2 for $40. **Wandering:** Het albino wandering, $75 each; normal wandering, $25 each / 2 for $40. Shipping is extra. Questions, call Scott at (919) 365-6120 EST, E-mail: SFelzersgarters@aol.com, web address: www.thamnophis.com/features/ScottFelzer/. [NC]

For sale: Green anacondas, c.b. 9/01, beautiful, healthy and DOCILE, $175 each; yellow anacondas, c.b. 6/01, flawless little screamers, $95 each; Amazon tree boas, c.b. 7/01, solid yellow, $125, orange and green, $150, both are female; 11' female tiger retic, stunning specimen, tame and a great feeder, $550 or best offer; jungle carpet pythons from nice black and yellow parents, $100 each or $175/pair. Mark Petros, Strictly Serpents, (847) 836-9426, E-mail: MLPserpent@hotmail.com.

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Part-Time Wildlife Educator Positions: looking for energetic, professional, outgoing, dedicated and knowledgeable herp people (raptor experience a plus but not mandatory) to lead wildlife birthday parties, scout groups and other weekend programs at a dynamic wildlife facility featuring native and non-native herps and birds of prey, MUST have experience working with kids/people in public settings, must be knowledgeable about natural history and how to intepret herps, excellent salary, commensurate with experience, flexible hours (must be available on weekends however), to apply, contact Rob Carmichael, Director/Curator of the Wildlife Discovery Center – City of Lake Forest, (847) 615-4388, or E-mail: carmichr@cityoflakeforest.com.

Wanted: big-headed turtles; mata mata turtles; Mexican giant mud turtles (*Staurotypus triporcatus*); exceptionally large common snappers (45 lbs. & up); large alligator snappers (over 90 lbs.); spectacled caiman from Trinidad, Tobago and Surinam; dwarf caiman; smooth-fronted caiman; albino turtles (except red-eared sliders). Walt Loose, (610) 926-6028, 9:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M. or after 11:30 P.M. Eastern Time.

Line ads in this publication are run free for CHS members—$2 per line for nonmembers. Any ad may be refused at the discretion of the Editor. Submit ads to: Michael Dloogatch, 6048 N. Lawndale Avenue, Chicago IL 60659, (773) 588-0728 evening telephone, (312) 782-2868 fax, E-mail: <MADadder0@aol.com>.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Chicago Herpetological Society will be held at 7:30 P.M., Wednesday, May 29, at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Cannon Drive and Fullerton Parkway, in Chicago. This will be our popular and always well-attended annual **Show & Tell** meeting. Bring an animal that you find interesting for one reason or another and be prepared to give a short (under five minutes) presentation to the group. Don't be shy. Age (yours) or commonness (the animal's) should not be a limitation. Guidelines for the occasion: don't bring venomous reptiles or endangered species, and please bring only amphibians or reptiles (this means no worms, tarantulas or other invertebrates).

At the June 26 meeting, **Dr. Andrew T. Holycross** of Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona, will speak to us about his research on rattlesnakes.

The regular monthly meetings of the Chicago Herpetological Society now take place at Chicago's newest museum—the **Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum**. This beautiful new building is at Fullerton Parkway and Cannon Drive, directly across Fullerton from the Lincoln Park Zoo. Meetings are held the last Wednesday of each month, from 7:30 P.M. through 9:30 P.M. Parking is free on Cannon Drive. A plethora of CTA buses stop nearby.

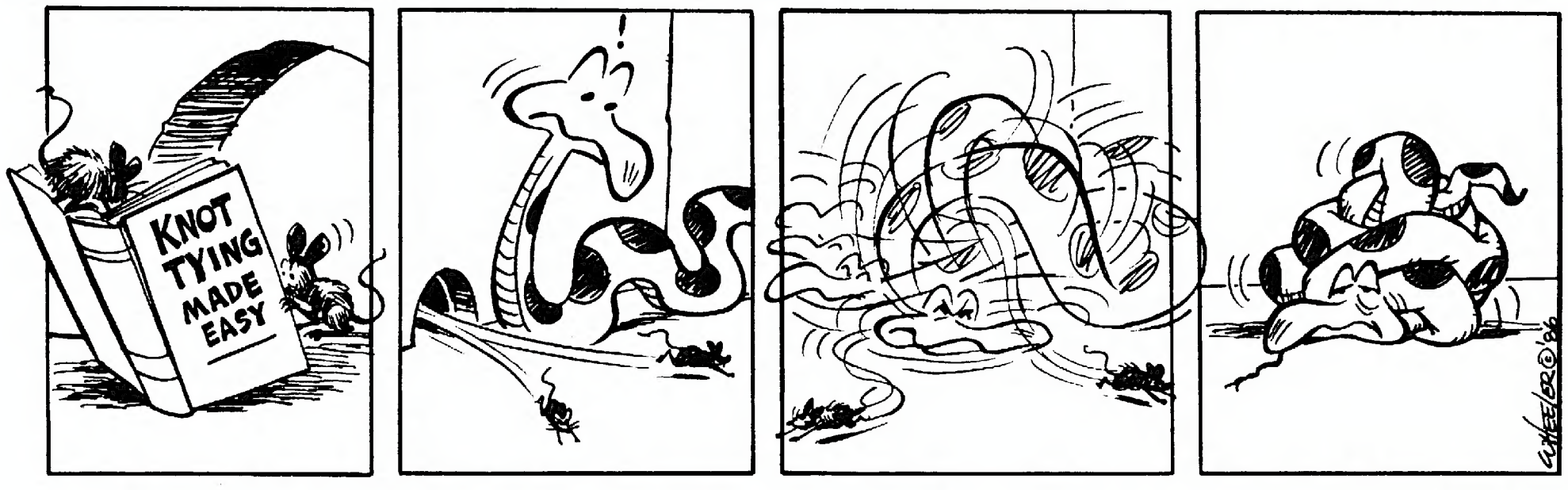
Board of Directors Meeting

Are you interested in how the decisions are made that determine how the Chicago Herpetological Society runs? And would you like to have input into those decisions? If so, mark your calendar for the June 14 board meeting, to be held at the North Park Village Administration Building, 5801 North Pulaski Road, Chicago. To get there take the Edens Expressway, I-94, and exit at Peterson eastbound. Go a mile east to Pulaski, turn right and go south to the first traffic light. Turn left at the light into the North Park Village complex. At the entrance is a stop sign and a guardhouse. When you come to a second stop sign, the administration building is the large building ahead and to your left. There is a free parking lot behind the building.

The Chicago Turtle Club

The next meeting of the Chicago Turtle Club will be on Sunday, May 26, 1:00 – 3:30 P.M., at the North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 N. Pulaski, in Chicago. This will be the club's annual "Turtle and Tortoise Extravaganza" at which members will display many of their favorite animals. Meetings are informal; questions, children and animals are welcome; parking is free. For more info call Lisa Koester, (773) 508-0034, or visit the CTC web site: http://www.geocities.com/~chicagoturtle.

THE ADVENTURES OF SPOT



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